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SUBJECT: LOEKKE HAS A DREAM: PRIME MINISTER'S TEN GOALS
FOR DENMARK IN 2020

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Rasmussen used his party's annual conference to propose ten specific goals for Denmark to attain by 2020. He called this his "Danish dream" - modelled explicitly on The American Dream and inspired by the life-story of President Obama. With this vision statement, Lars Loekke Rasmussen bids to take a major step out from the shadow of his predecessor, without repudiating his work. While his own party and its coalition partner the Conservatives reacted positively, others expressed skepticism as to ways and means of achieving these goals, fearing it would be at the expense of existing entitlements. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The leading governing party Venstre held its annual conference November 21-22 in Odense - its first since Lars Loekke Rasmussen took over as Prime Minister from Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who left in April to become Secretary General of NATO. Attendance was down for a variety of reasons: fatigue after the local-election campaign, disappointment at the mixed results, lack of clarity about the program due to the leadership's focus on the upcoming COP-15 climate conference, and even the flu. Loekke nonetheless used the occasion to articulate a set of ten goals for Denmark to attain by 2020 (see paragraph 3 below). He explicitly cited The American Dream and the life-story of President Obama as his inspiration. In articulating this vision, Loekke was taking a big step out from his predecessor's shadow, without repudiating the legacy of the man who dominated Danish politics this decade - and who was present at the party conference. Initial reaction within Venstre and its coalition partner the Conservative People's Party was positive, while the opposition dismissed the proposal as "hot air" in the absence of a strategy for attaining the goals. The Danish People's Party, which provides indispensable support to the ruling coalition from outside government, said it would wait and see what concrete initiatives the PM comes up with; meanwhile, it laid down a marker that striving for these goals should not come at the expense of existing entitlement programs.

¶3. (U) The PM's goals are as follows:

- Be one of the world's top ten countries in per capita GDP (currently 11th);
- Be among the world's top three entrepreneurial countries;
- Be among the world's top ten in labor-market participation rate (currently 14th);
- Be among the world's top five countries in student performance in reading, math and science, measured against PISA standards, and in English, measured against other non-English-speaking countries;

- Have at least one university among Europe's top ten, as rated in the annual Times Higher Education report;
- Be among the top ten countries in the world in median life expectancy;
- Be among the world's top three most energy-efficient countries, and among the top three in percentage increase in use of renewable energy;
- Among the best EU countries at integrating non-Western immigrants and their families into the labor market, measured in terms of rate of employment (currently 57 percent);
- Be among the lowest countries in Europe in terms of probability of experiencing a crime;
- Continue to have one of the five strongest economies as measured in terms of unemployment rate, public deficit, inflation, inflation stability, and balance of payments deficit.

14. (U) What Denmark would need to do to attain these goals remains to be spelled out. Professor Torben M. Andersen, former head of the "wise men" of the economy, said achieving the PM's goals would require far-reaching reform of the early-retirement, unemployment-insurance and incapacity-pension schemes.

15. (SBU) Besides Loekke's "Danish dream," the highlight of the conference was a live video teleconference with a Danish soldier in Helmand, Afghanistan, who described the progress

he and his comrades have seen and contributed to. The party conferees gave the soldier two standing ovations. NATO SecGen Anders Fogh Rasmussen was on hand at the Venstre conference calling for NATO allies to bear their share of the burden. PM Lars Loekke Rasmussen ruled out setting a date for exiting Afghanistan, but expressed hope that Danish troops would soon be able to shift focus from combat to training and reconstruction.

16. (SBU) Contributing to the less-than-festive atmosphere at the Venstre conference was the widespread expectation that the PM was about to name Climate and Energy Minister Connie Hedegaard of the Conservatives as Denmark's next EU Commissioner, and that he was simply waiting until after the conference to make the announcement. Typically, the EU Commissioner would be expected to come from Venstre, as it is by far the larger party in the ruling coalition. The decision is entirely the Prime Minister's to make. The most talked-about possibility from within Venstre, Education Minister Bertel Haarder, told Poloff he was "ready and willing" in case he got the call. (NOTE: Two days after the conference, Hedegaard got the job.)

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